

Dove: A Redemption Story

Kevin Greer

Dorrance Publishing

(370pp)

978-1-63937-357-4

Dove is a thorough memoir about a personal fall from grace—and a triumphant return to Christianity.

Kevin Greer's memoir *Dove* is about confronting grief via faith.

Greer grew up in Chicago's South Side in the 1960s and 1970s. He attended Catholic schools, though his parents were not religious. He felt a connection to Christianity himself, though, and he became a youth pastor when he was eighteen. The book credits his early faith with his rise above the peer pressure to use drugs and alcohol.

Greer married young. He and his wife had four sons in as many years. When his marriage fell apart, he fled to California, lost his faith, and remained adrift for years. He moved back to Chicago in the 1990s to care for his elderly mother. Then, when two of his sons met tragic ends, Greer returned to Christianity, leading evangelical missions in Africa and the Middle East to share his love of Jesus.

The book is split into three parts—the first detailing Greer's youth in Chicago; the second following his disconnection from his faith; and the third detailing his return to Christianity and his mission trips abroad. But its tone and narrative style are inconsistent. Some of its chapters are thematic and skip around in time, obscuring their contexts; when the book employs a chronological timeline, its progression is more lucid. Factors like the tensions in Greer's first marriages are rushed through; the divorces, and Greer's subsequent feelings of restlessness, are under established as a result. And the book's last section often focuses on depicting the locations where Greer evangelized; it represents marked tonal changes in its move away from personal anecdotes to proselytizing. Further, the book's emotional moments are undermined by its use of clichés.

Still, there are moments in which the book's sharp sensory details do result in tangible scenes. This is true in the book's first section in particular, whose childhood memories are full and distinctive. Greer's parents and grandparents are fleshed out in terms of their values, fears, and memories of growing up in the South, from the post-Civil War period onward. Also sharp and poignant are peeks into Greer's inner world, showing how his state of mind influenced his actions. Indeed, the book includes some affecting insights, as when Greer realizes that, if there were a family emergency while he were in California, he'd be helpless: by the time he "could rustle up money for the four-hour flight back home, it would be all over but the shouting."

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AIMÉE JODOIN (May 6, 2022)

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